KRISHNA : THE SAVIOUR

SHUKADEVA WAS NARRATING TO PAREEKSHIT THE EVENTS FOLLOWING THE RAJASOOYA YAJNA OF YUDHISHTHIRA.

WHILE KRISHNA WAS AT INDRAPRASTHA, DWARAKA WAS ATTACKED BY SHALVA.

WHY DID HE DO THAT?

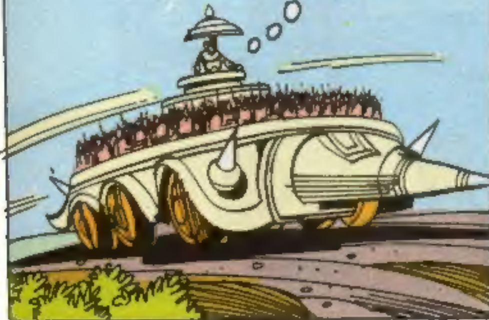
"SHALVA WAS A FRIEND OF SHISHUPALA'S AND HAD ACCOMPANIED HIM TO THE SWAYAMVARA OF RUKMINI. WHEN KRISHNA DEFEATED THEM ALL AND TOOK AWAY RUKMINI, SHALVA HAD VOWED—

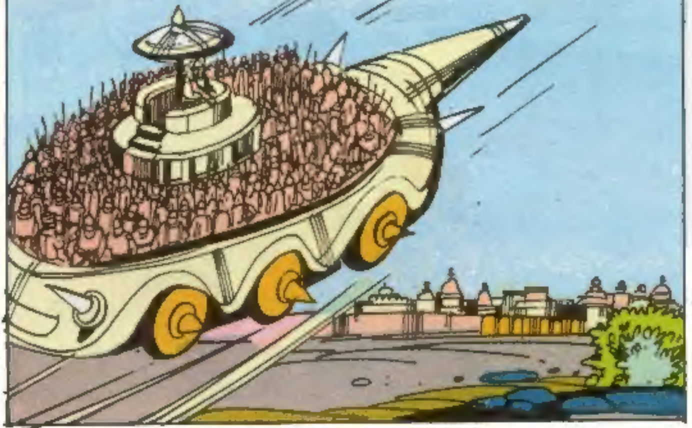
I WILL DESTROY ALL THE YADAVAS ONE DAY. JUST WAIT AND SEE.

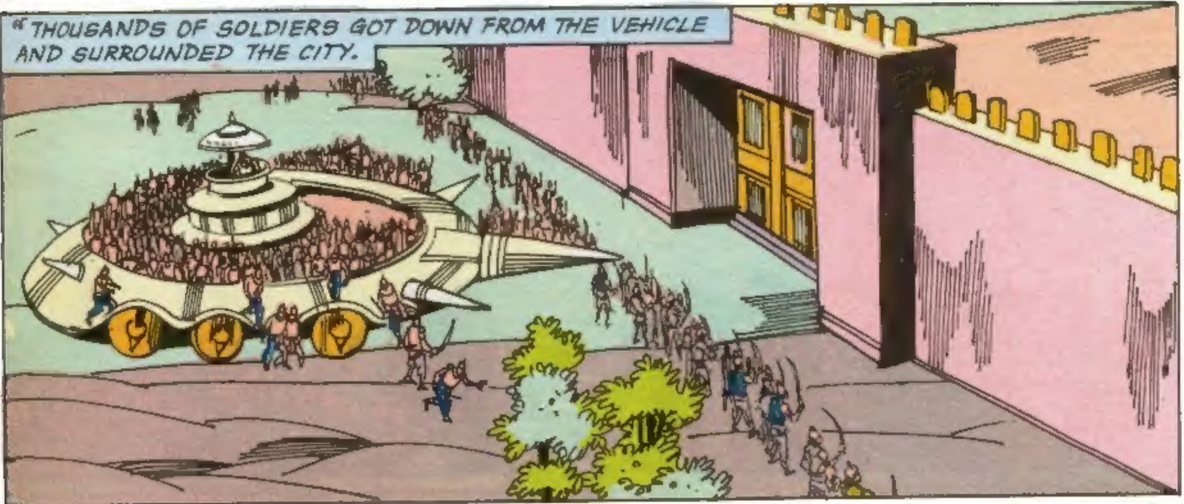
"HE THEN BEGAN A SEVERE PENANCE. AFTER HE HAD PRACTISED AUSTERITIES FOR A YEAR, LORD SHIVA APPEARED BEFORE HIM.

I WANT A VEHICLE TO ATTACK THE YADAVAS. IT SHOULD BE ABLE TO TRAVEL ANYWHERE-IN AIR, WATER OR ON LAND AND IT MUST BE INDESTRUCTIBLE.

YOUR WISH WILL BE FULFILLED.

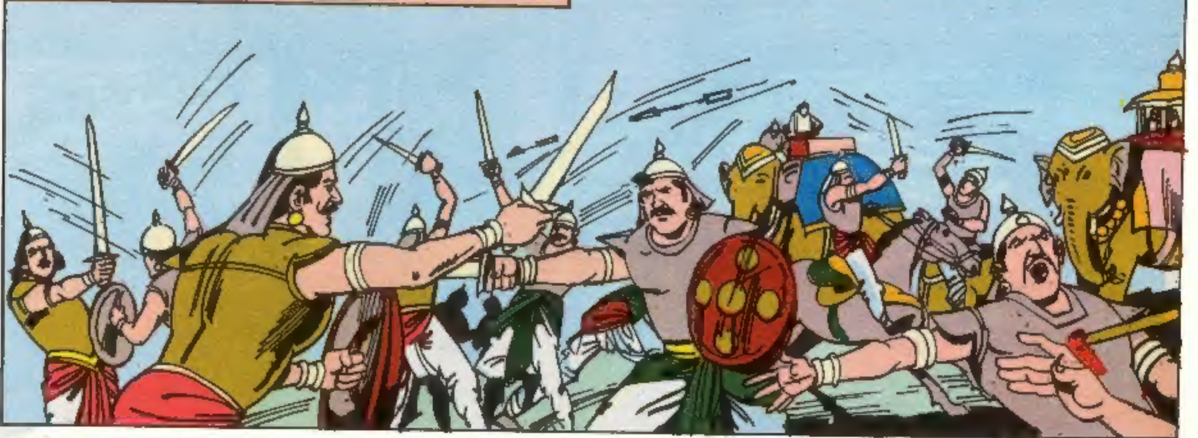

"SAUBHA, THE INDESTRUCTIBLE VEHICLE, MADE SHALVA ARROGANT. IT COULD CARRY THOUSANDS OF SOLDIERS.
IT CAN TAKE ME WHEREVER I WISH TO GO. I AM INVINCIBLE NOW.


"WHEN HE HEARD OF HIS FRIEND, SHISHUPALA'S DEATH, HE BECAME FURIOUS. SEATED IN SAUBHA, HE ATTACKED DWARAKA.

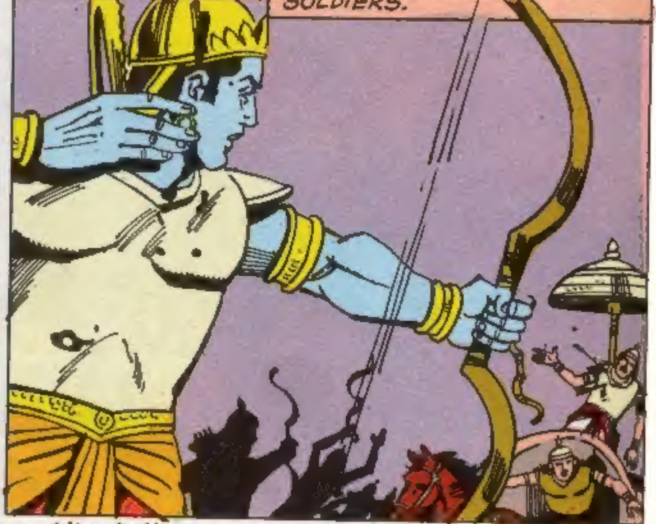

"THOUSANDS OF SOLDIERS GOT DOWN FROM THE VEHICLE AND SURROUNDED THE CITY.


"FROM HIS AIRBORNE VEHICLE, SHALVA RAINED DOWN STRANGE OBJECTS ON THE CITIZENS BELOW.
RUN! HUGE STONES, SERPENTS AND TREES ARE RAINING DOWN FROM THE SKIES!
THERE IS SO MUCH OF DUST AROUND US THAT WE CAN HARDLY SEE A THING.


"IN THE ABSENCE OF KRISHNA, HIS BRAVE SON PRADYUMNA TOOK CHARGE.
KRISHNA IS NOT HERE TO SAVE US.
HELP! WE ARE BEING ATTACKED
DO NOT BE AFRAID. WE WILL PROTECT YOU.

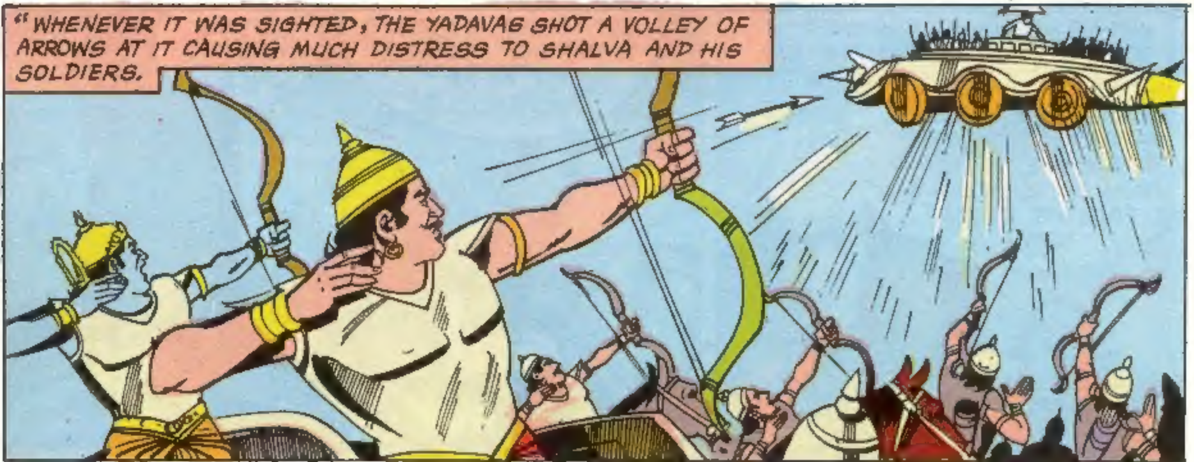

"FOLLOWED BY HIS BROTHERS AND OTHER BRAVE YADAVA WARRIORS, PRADYUMNA MET SHALVA'S ARMY IN A FIERCE BATTLE.

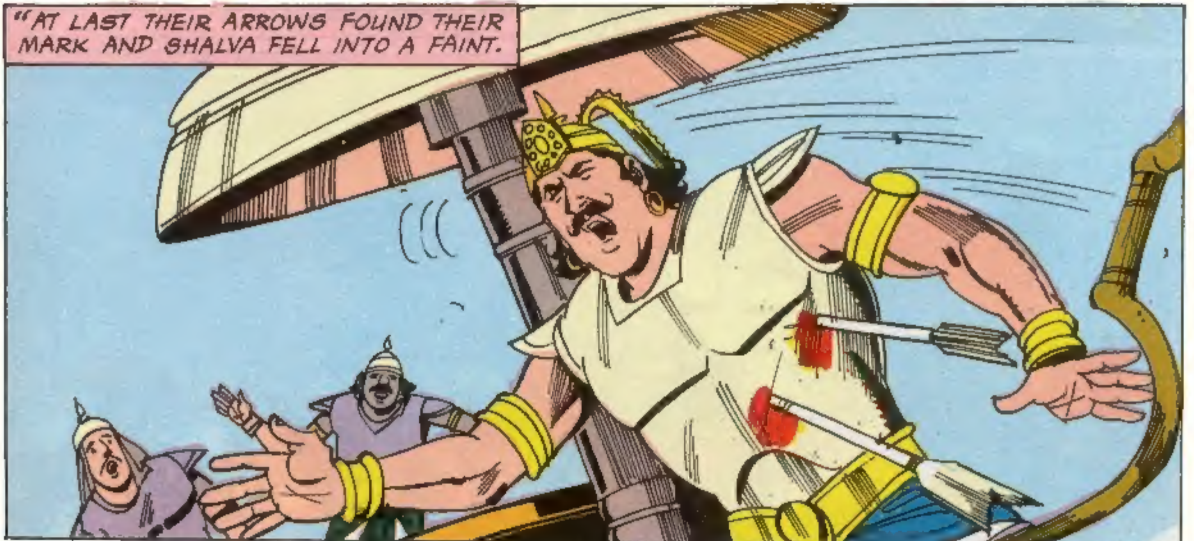

"WELL VERSED AS HE WAS IN THE ART OF USING CELESTIAL WEAPONS, PRADYUMNA DESTROYED THE ILLUSIONS CREATED BY SHALVA.


"WITH HIS SHARP, IRON-TIPPED ARROWS, HE WOUNDED SHALVA'S COMMANDER AS WELL AS HIS SOLDIERS.

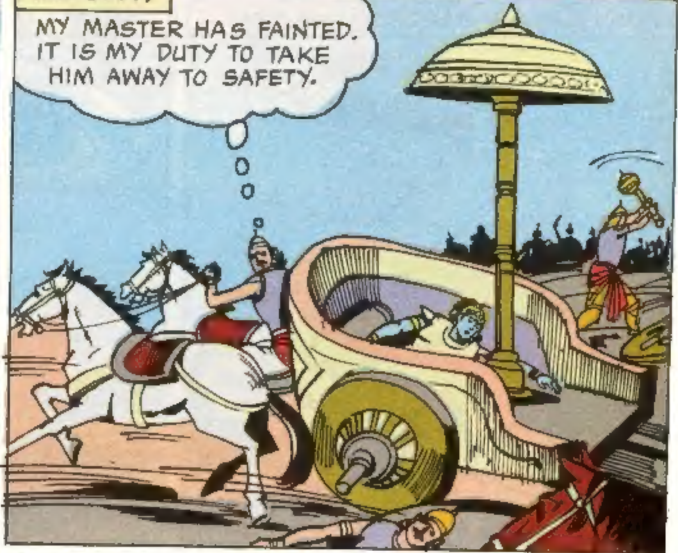

"BUT SHALVA IN HIS AIRBORNE VEHICLE APPEARED TO BE INVINCIBLE. THE VEHICLE WOULD MAGICALLY DISAPPEAR...


"...AND THEN SUDDENLY APPEAR IN ANOTHER SPOT. ONE MINUTE IT WOULD BE FLYING THROUGH THE AIR, THE NEXT IT WOULD BE IN WATER.


"WHENEVER IT WAS SIGHTED, THE YADAVAS SHOT A VOLLEY OF ARROWS AT IT CAUSING MUCH DISTRESS TO SHALVA AND HIS SOLDIERS.

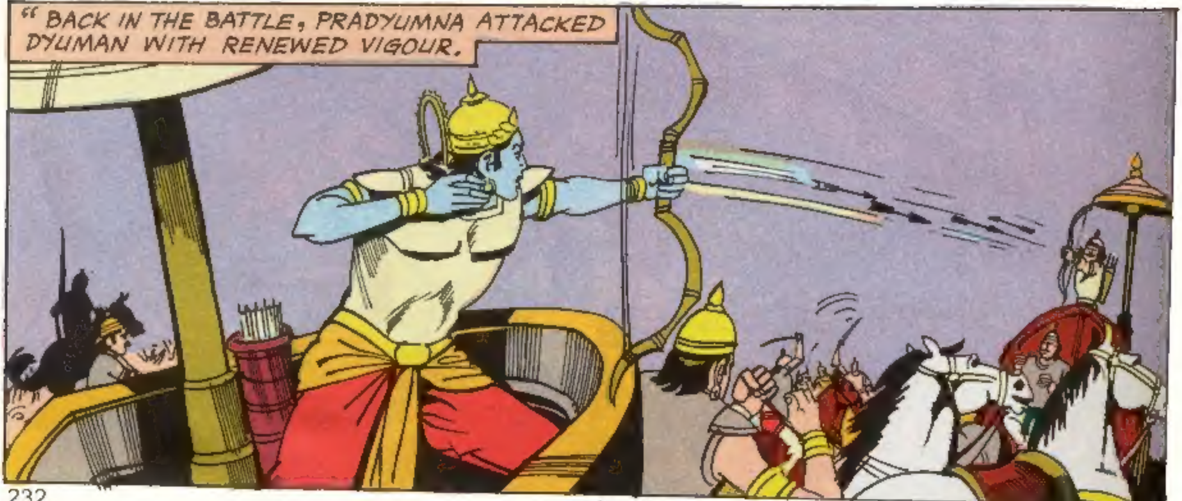

"AT LAST THEIR ARROWS FOUND THEIR MARK AND SHALVA FELL INTO A FAINT.

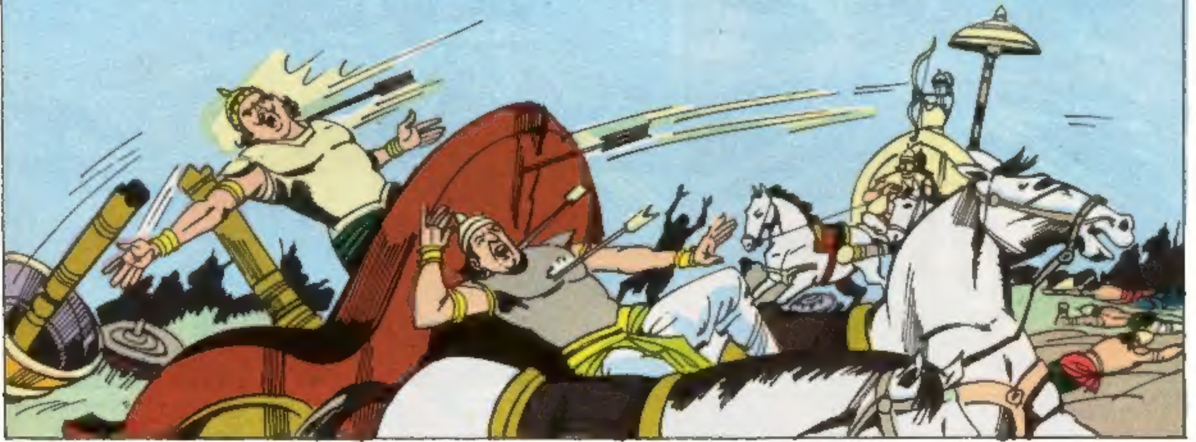

"NOW DYUMAN, A MINISTER OF SHALVA, ATTACKED PRADYUMNA.
GOT YOU!


"PRADYUMNA'S CHARIOTEER CARRIED HIM AWAY FROM THE SPOT.
MY MASTER HAS FAINTED. IT IS MY DUTY TO TAKE HIM AWAY TO SAFETY.


"WHEN PRADYUMNA REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS, HE WAS FURIOUS.
WHY DID YOU BRING ME AWAY FROM THE BATTLEFIELD? HAS ANY YADAVA EVER RUN AWAY FROM BATTLE? HOW CAN I FACE MY PEOPLE NOW?


BUT IT WAS MY DUTY TO PROTECT YOU, WHEN YOU WERE UNCONSCIOUS.
LET US GO BACK AT ONCE.


"BACK IN THE BATTLE, PRADYUMNA ATTACKED DYUMAN WITH RENEWED VIGOUR.

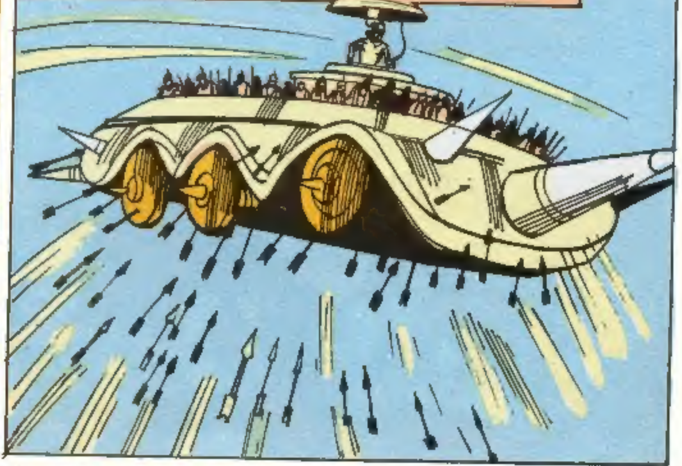

"SOON, DYUMAN'S HORSES AND CHARIOT WERE DESTROYED. FINALLY THE BRAVE DYUMAN TOO FELL.


"MEANWHILE THE OTHER YADAVA WARRIORS INCLUDING GADA, SATYAKI AND SAMBA, KEPT UP THEIR ATTACK ON SHALVA'S FORCES AND DECIMATED THEIR SOLDIERS, WHO WERE RAINING ARROWS ON THEM FROM THE AIRBORNE VEHICLE. FOR TWENTY-SEVEN LONG DAYS, THE FIERCE BATTLE CONTINUED.

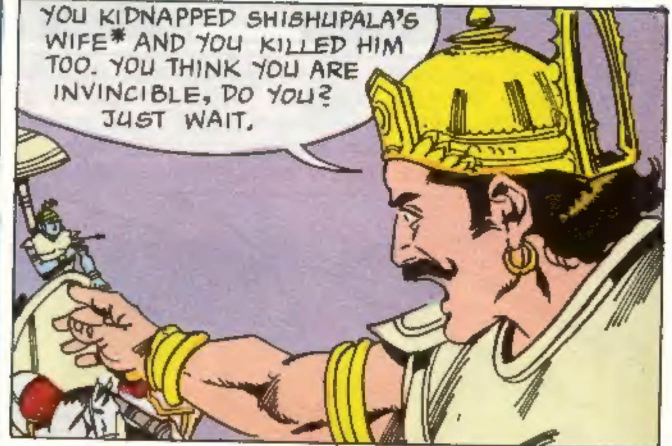

"WHEN KRISHNA AND BALARAMA RETURNED FROM INDRAPRASTHA, THEY FOUND THEIR BELOVED CITY DWARAKA UNDER SIEGE.


"AS SOON AS HE SAW KRISHNA, SHALVA AIMED THE POWERFUL WEAPON, SHAKTI, AT DARUKA, KRISHNA'S CHARIOTEER.













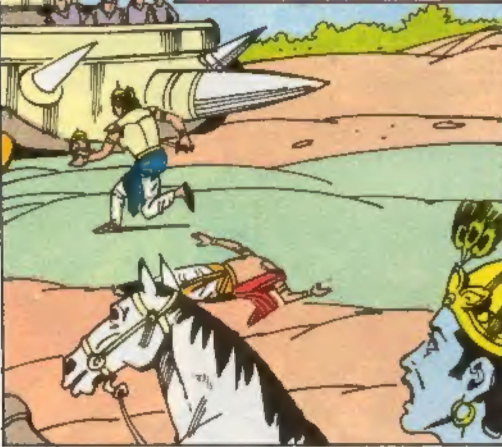
* REFERENCE TO RUKMINI, WHO WAS BETROTHED TO SHISHUPALA.


"SHALVA WAS BADLY INJURED BUT WITH HIS MAGIC VEHICLE, HE SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED.

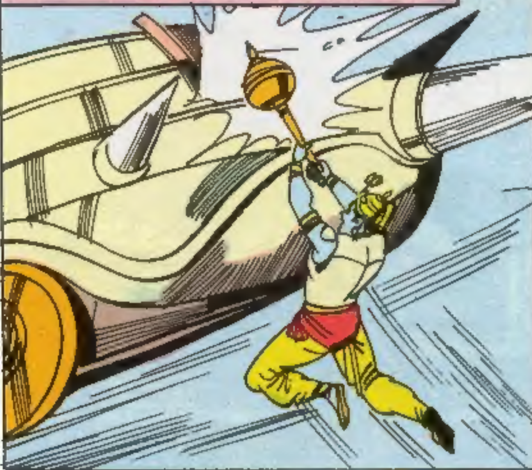

" SOON A MESSENGER RUSHED TO KRISHNA, WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES.
KRISHNA! KRISHNA! YOUR MOTHER DEVAKI HAS SENT ME. SHALVA HAS CAPTURED YOUR FATHER VASUDEVA.


" KRISHNA BECAME SAD LIKE AN ORDINARY MORTAL.
HOW COULD SHALVA OVERPOWER BALARAMA AND KIDNAP MY FATHER?


" SHALVA THEN REAPPEARED CLASPING VASUDEVA.
SEE! HERE IS YOUR DEAR FATHER. I WILL BEHEAD HIM BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES.







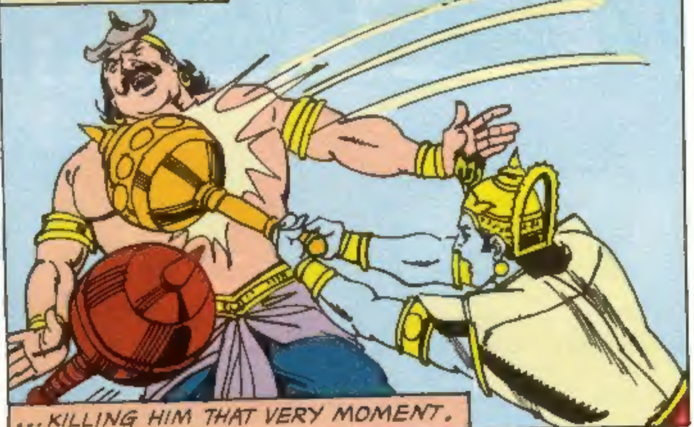


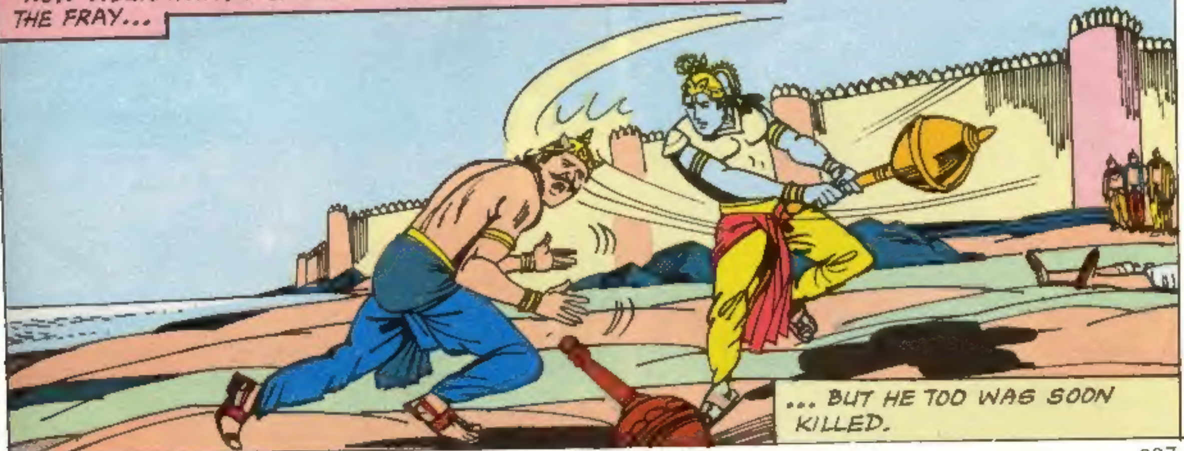


* ILLUSORY POWER ** DISC

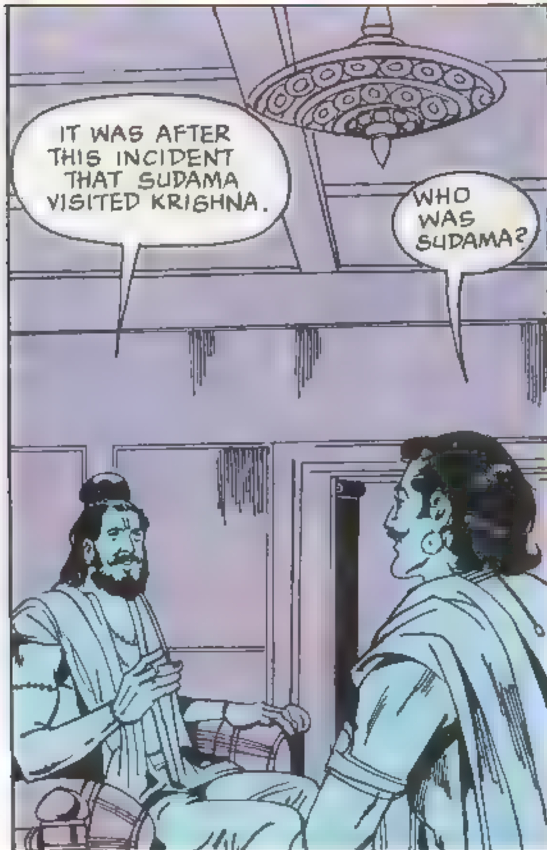

"DANTAVAKRA, ANOTHER FRIEND OF SHISHUPALA'S, ARRIVED ON THE BATTLE FIELD JUST THEN.
I MUST AVENGE THE DEATH OF MY FRIENDS—SHISHUPALA, PAUNDRAKA AND SHALVA.

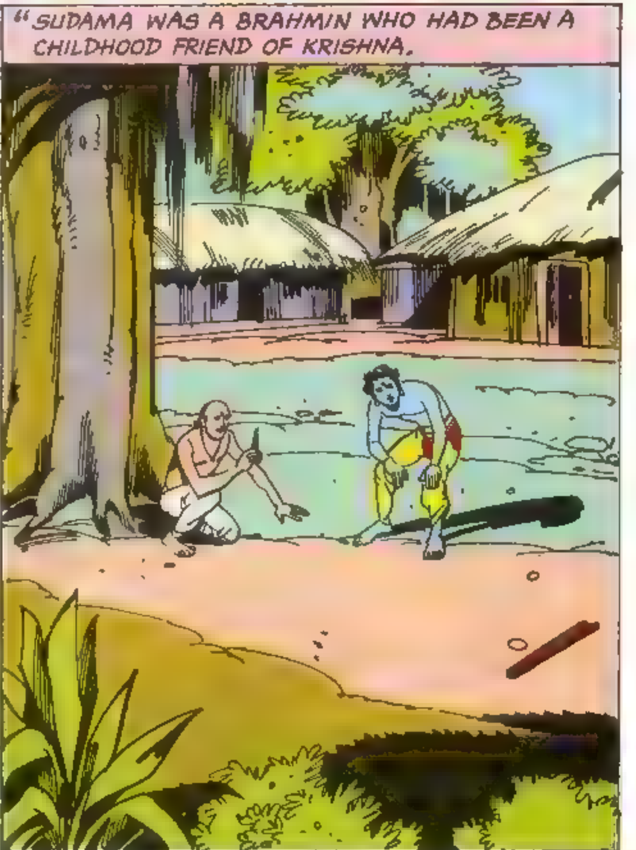

"THOUGH HE WAS ARMED WITH ONLY A MACE, DANTAVAKRA'S HEAVY STEPS MADE THE VERY EARTH TREMBLE.
THE ONLY WAY I CAN DO IT IS BY KILLING YOU.

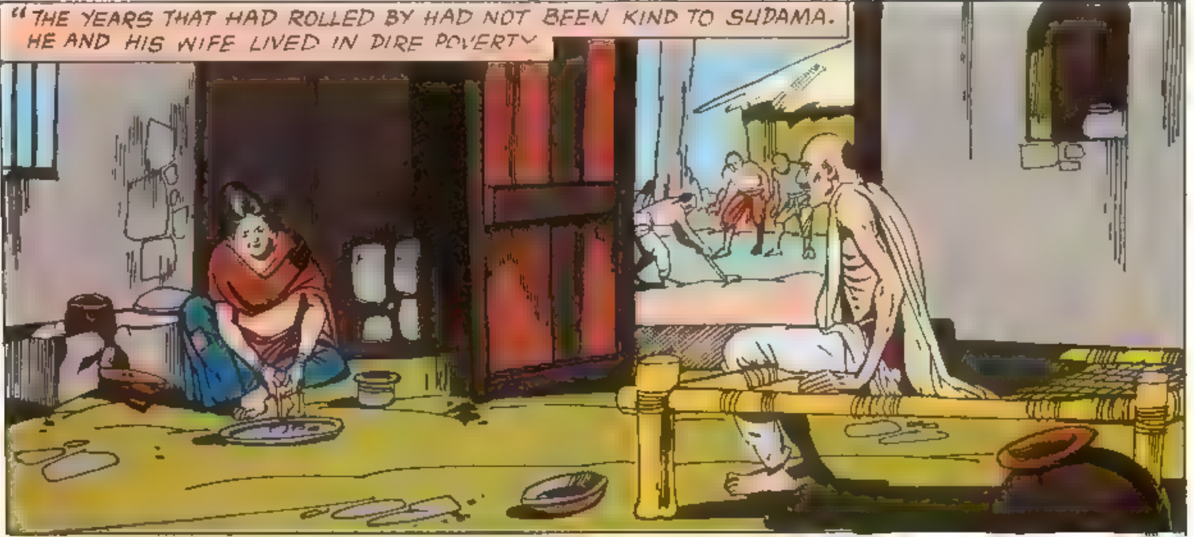

" BUT IN SPITE OF THE HEAVY BLOW, KRISHNA WAS UNRUFFLED. TAKING CAREFUL AIM, HE HIT DANTAVAKRA ON THE CHEST...
...KILLING HIM THAT VERY MOMENT.

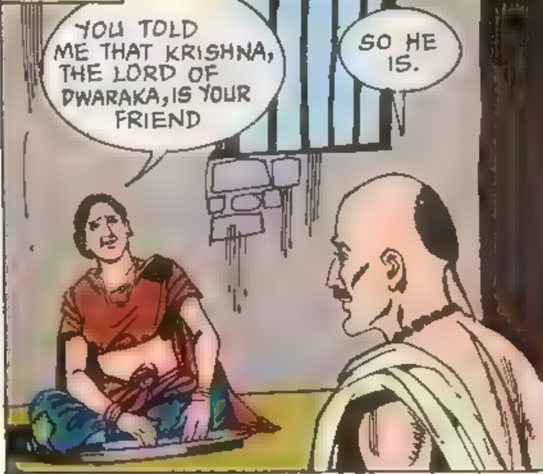

"NOW VIDURATHA, THE BROTHER OF DANTAVAKRA ENTERED THE FRAY...
... BUT HE TOO WAS SOON KILLED.

"THE VICTORIOUS YADAVA ARMY ENTERED THE CITY AMIDST JOYOUS CHEERING.

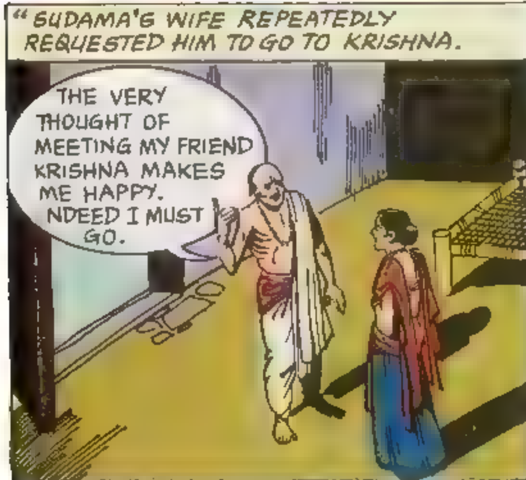


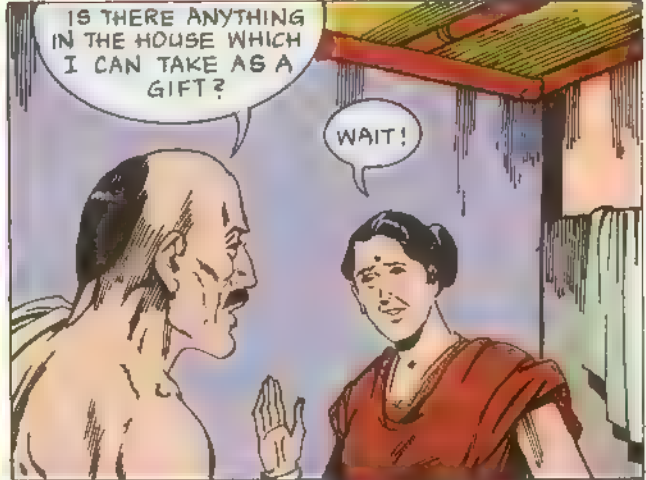


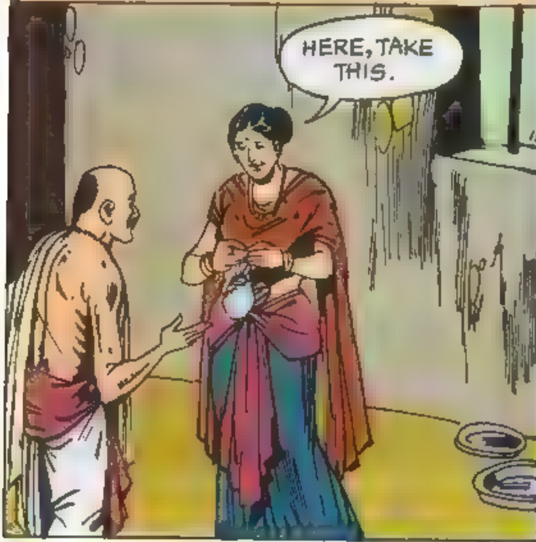

"THE YEARS THAT HAD ROLLED BY HAD NOT BEEN KIND TO SUDAMA. HE AND HIS WIFE LIVED IN DIRE POVERTY.

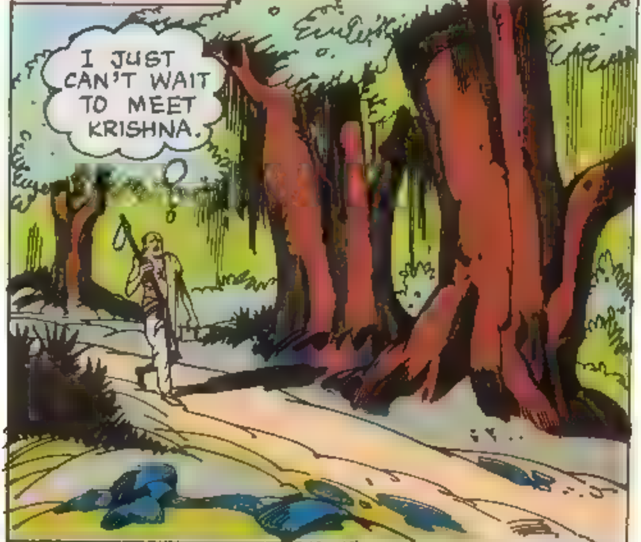

"THOUGH SHE WAS ALWAYS IN TATTERED CLOTHES AND STARVING, FOR LONG SUDAMA'S WIFE BORE HER SUFFERING PATIENTLY. ONE DAY —
YOU TOLD ME THAT KRISHNA, THE LORD OF DWARAKA, IS YOUR FRIEND
SO HE IS.

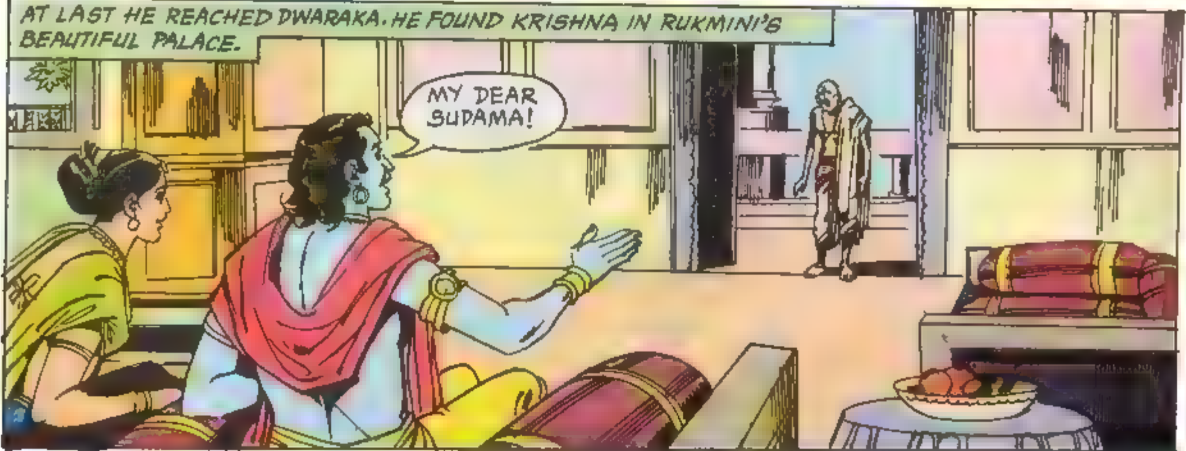

WHY DON'T YOU GO AND MEET HIM? WHEN HE COMES TO KNOW THAT YOU HAVE A FAMILY TO SUPPORT, HE WILL SURELY HELP YOU.

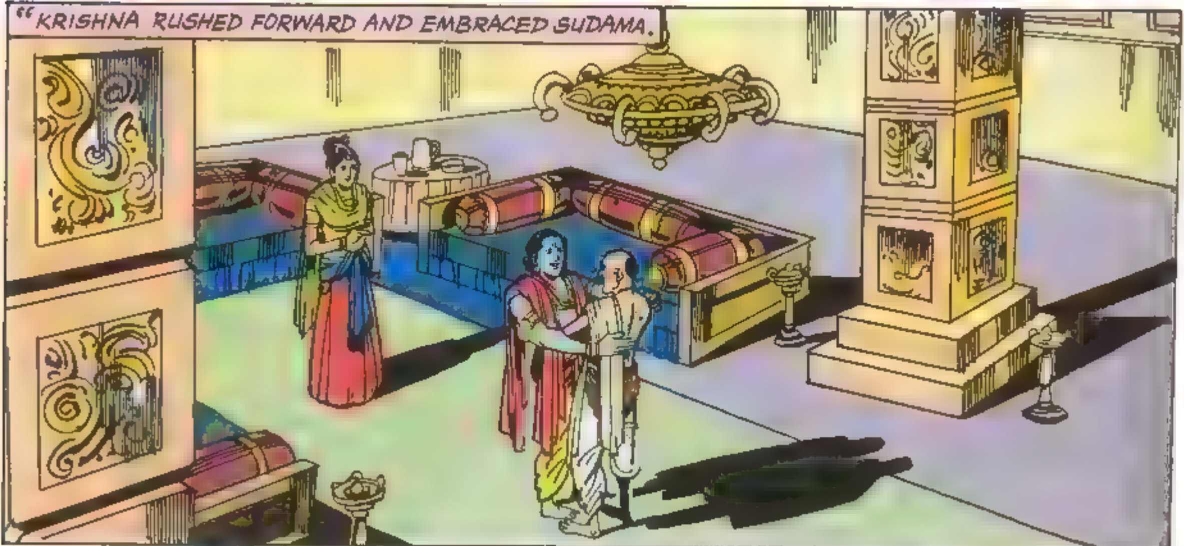

"SUDAMA'S WIFE REPEATEDLY REQUESTED HIM TO GO TO KRISHNA.
THE VERY THOUGHT OF MEETING MY FRIEND KRISHNA MAKES ME HAPPY. NDEED I MUST GO.


IS THERE ANYTHING IN THE HOUSE WHICH I CAN TAKE AS A GIFT?
WAIT!

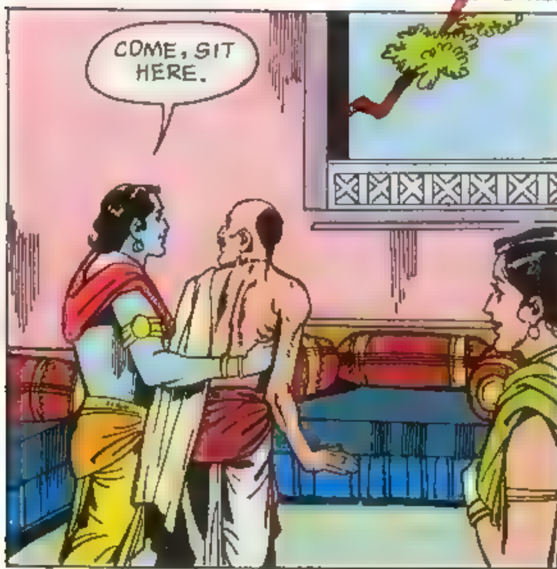

"QUICKLY SHE COLLECTED A FEW HANDFUL OF POWA* FROM HER NEIGHBOURS.
HERE, TAKE THIS.

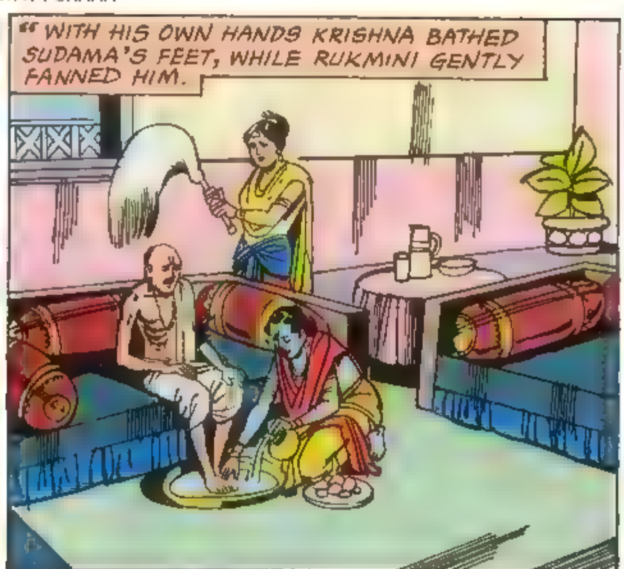

" WITH THE SMALL BUNDLE, SUDAMA SET OUT FOR DWARAKA.
I JUST CAN'T WAIT TO MEET KRISHNA.

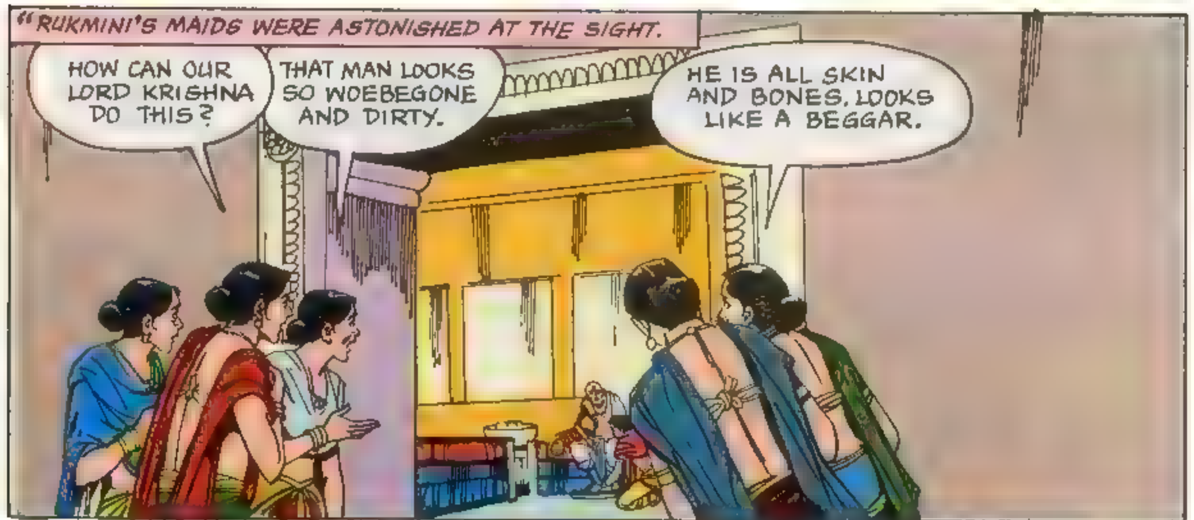

AT LAST HE REACHED DWARAKA. HE FOUND KRISHNA IN RUKMINI'S BEAUTIFUL PALACE.
MY DEAR SUDAMA!

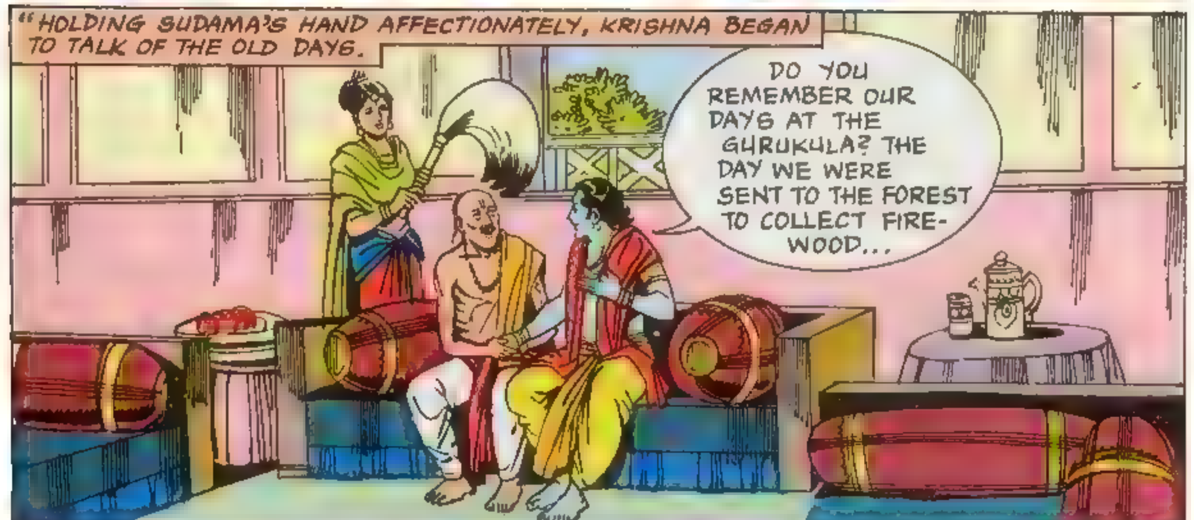

"KRISHNA RUSHED FORWARD AND EMBRACED SUDAMA.

* BEATEN RICE

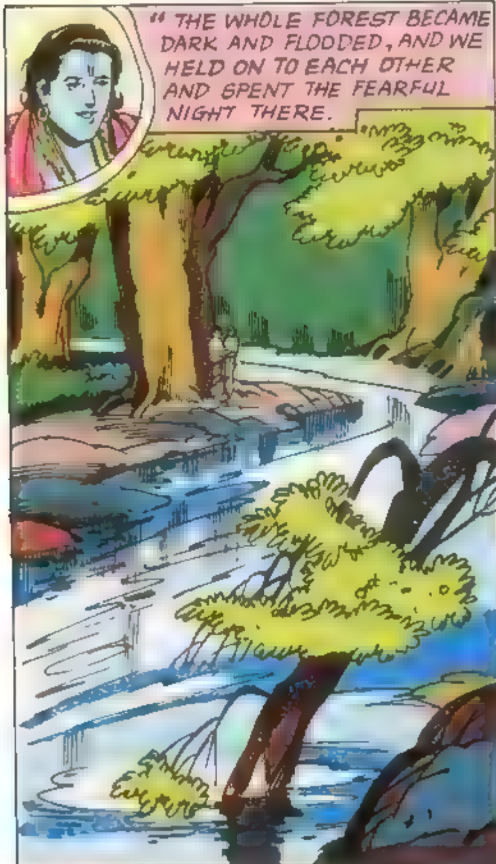

COME, SIT HERE.

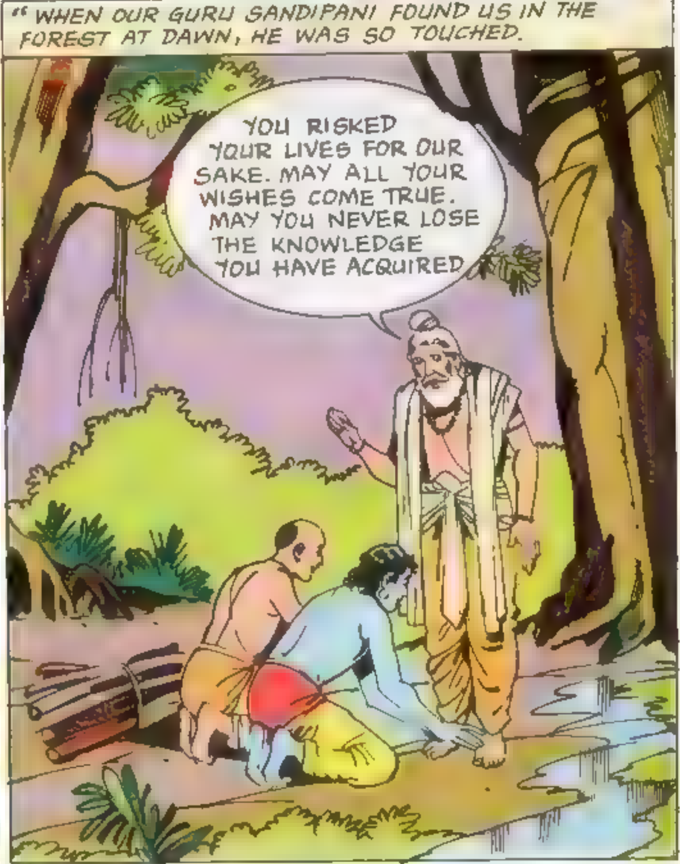

"WITH HIS OWN HANDS KRISHNA BATHED SUDAMA'S FEET, WHILE RUKMINI GENTLY FANNED HIM.


"RUKMINI'S MAIDS WERE ASTONISHED AT THE SIGHT.
HOW CAN OUR LORD KRISHNA DO THIS?
THAT MAN LOOKS SO WOEBEGONE AND DIRTY.
HE IS ALL SKIN AND BONES. LOOKS LIKE A BEGGAR.


"HOLDING SUDAMA'S HAND AFFECTIONATELY, KRISHNA BEGAN TO TALK OF THE OLD DAYS.
DO YOU REMEMBER OUR DAYS AT THE GURUKULA? THE DAY WE WERE SENT TO THE FOREST TO COLLECT FIRE-WOOD...

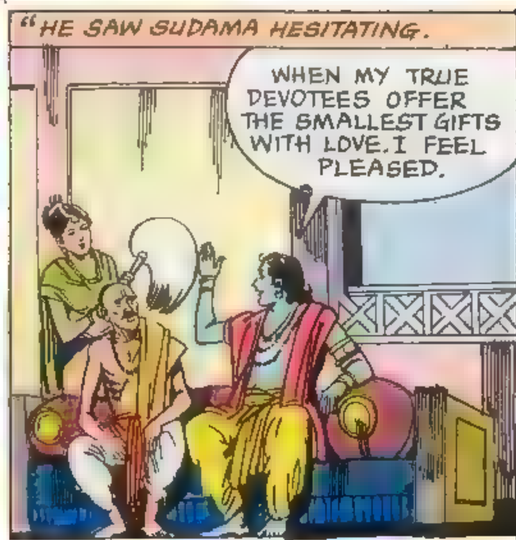
DO YOU REMEMBER THE TERRIBLE STORM THAT SUDDENLY BROKE OUT?



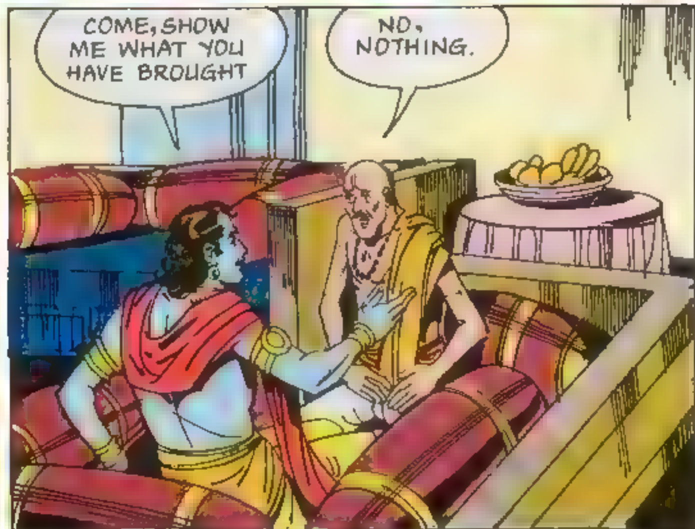



INDEED I WAS FORTUNATE TO BE WITH YOU AT THE GURUKUL.

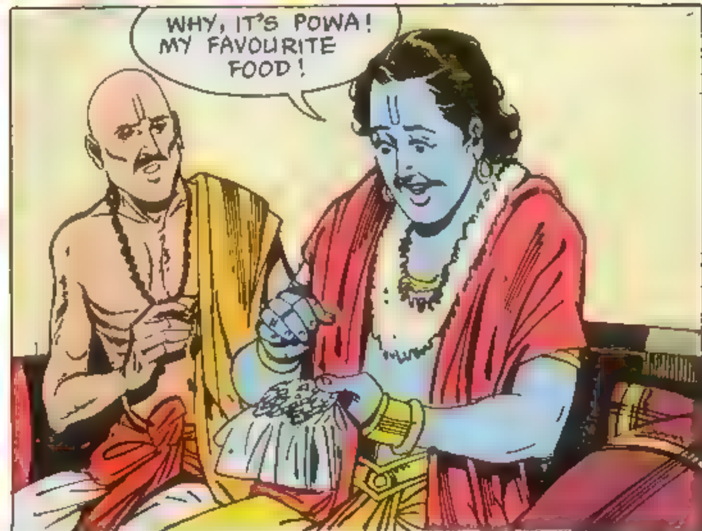

"FOR LONG, THE TWO FRIENDS CHATTED TOGETHER. THEN WITH A TWINKLE IN HIS EYE, KRISHNA SAID —
WHAT PRESENT HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME?

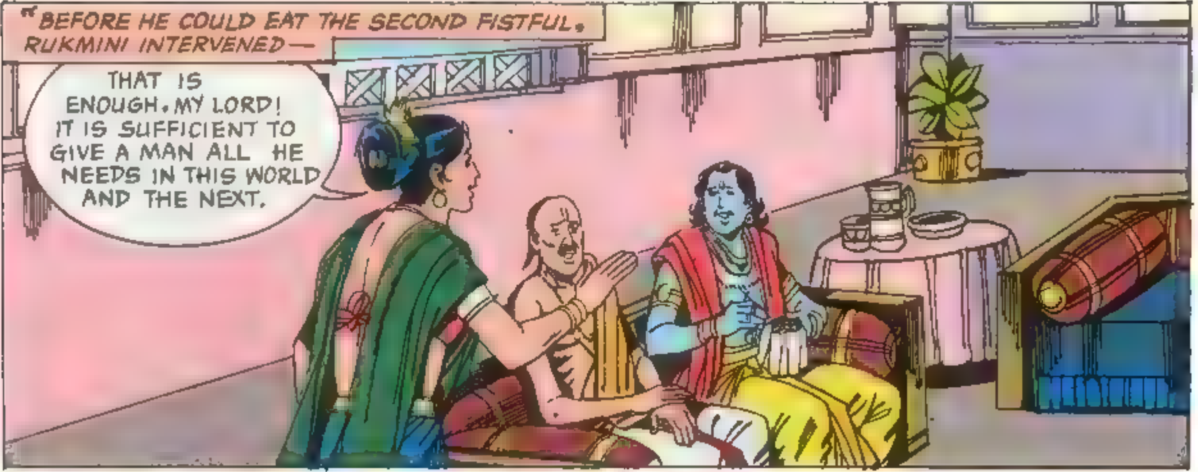

"HE SAW SUDAMA HESITATING.
WHEN MY TRUE DEVOTEES OFFER THE SMALLEST GIFTS WITH LOVE, I FEEL PLEASED.


ON THE OTHER HAND, RICH EXPENSIVE PRESENTS OFFERED TO ME WITHOUT ANY DEVOTION HAVE NO MEANING FOR ME.

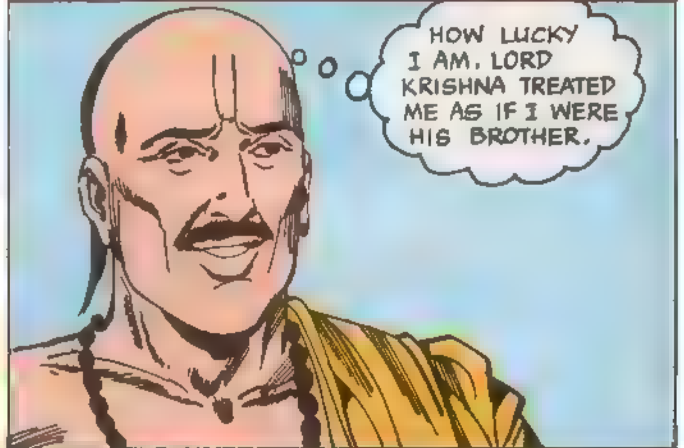

COME, SHOW ME WHAT YOU HAVE BROUGHT
NO, NOTHING.

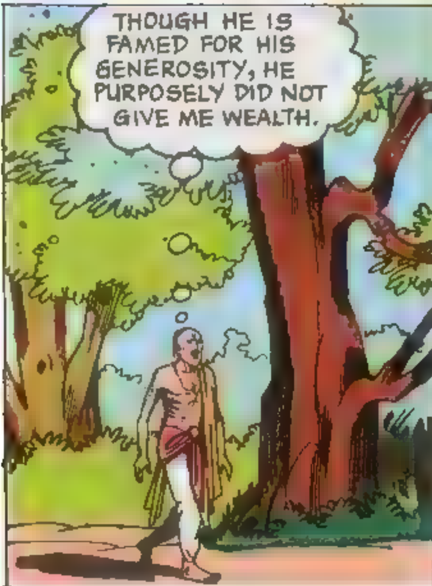

AH! GOT IT.

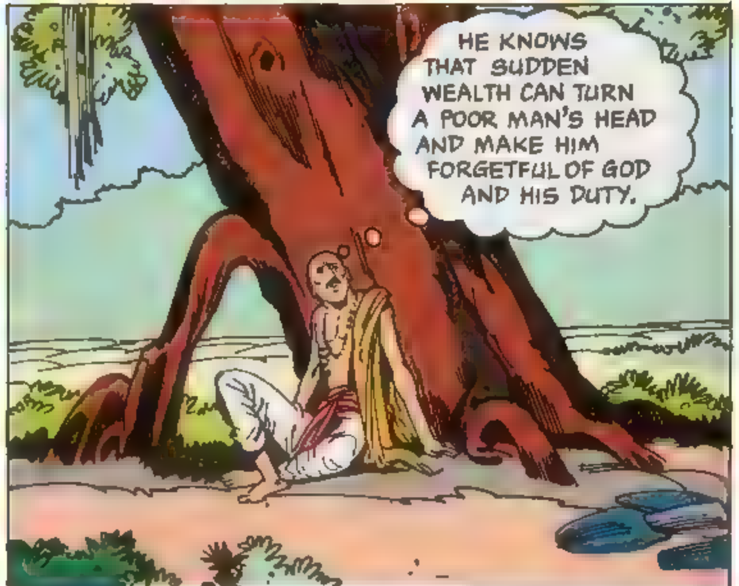

WHY, IT'S POWA! MY FAVOURITE FOOD!

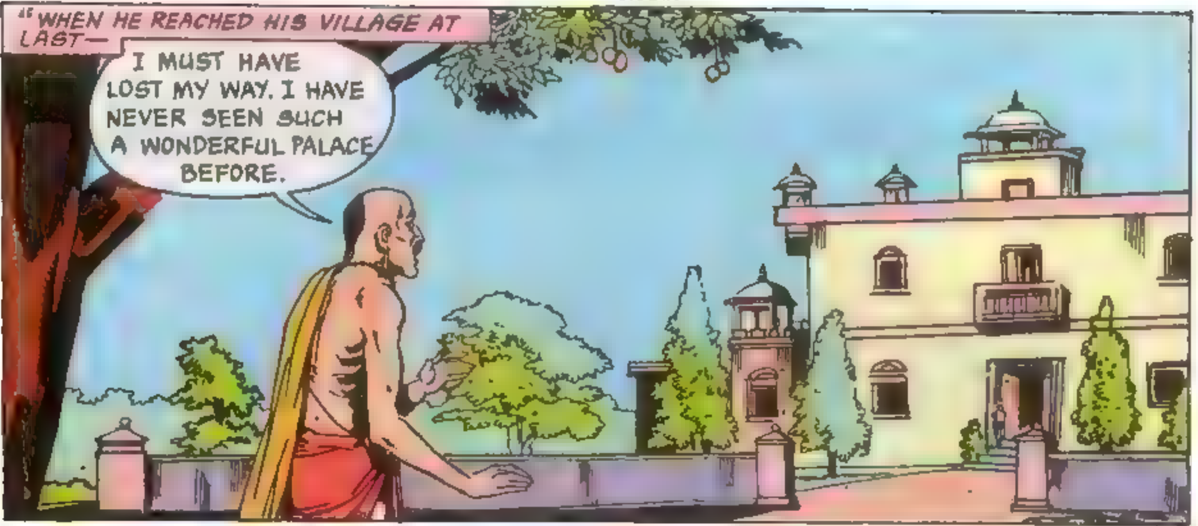

"BEFORE HE COULD EAT THE SECOND FISTFUL, RUKMINI INTERVENED—
THAT IS ENOUGH, MY LORD! IT IS SUFFICIENT TO GIVE A MAN ALL HE NEEDS IN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT.

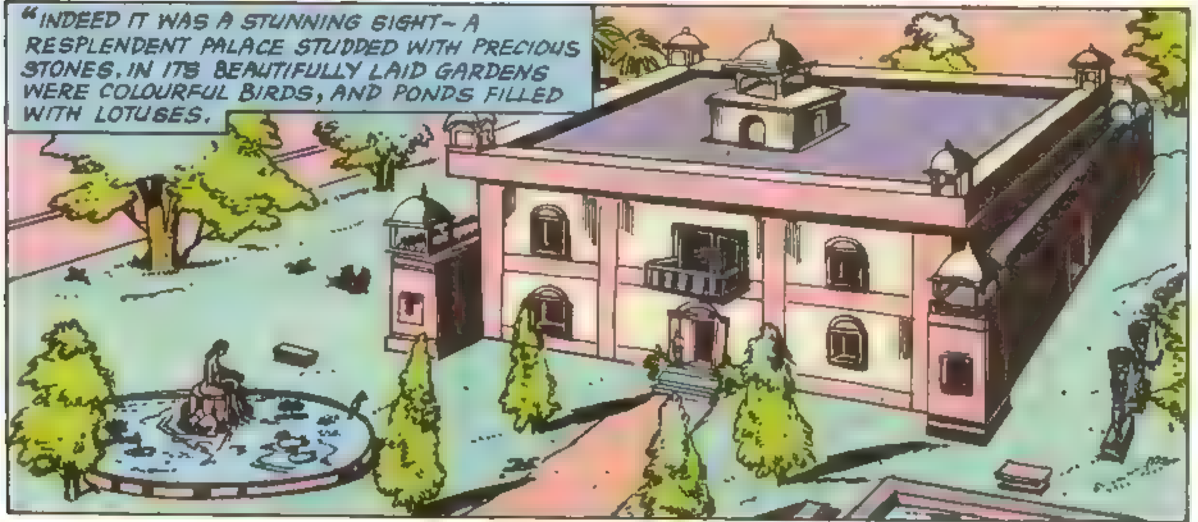

"SUDAMA SPENT THE NIGHT IN KRISHNA'S PALACE.
WHAT COMFORT AND LUXURY! I FEEL I AM IN HEAVEN.

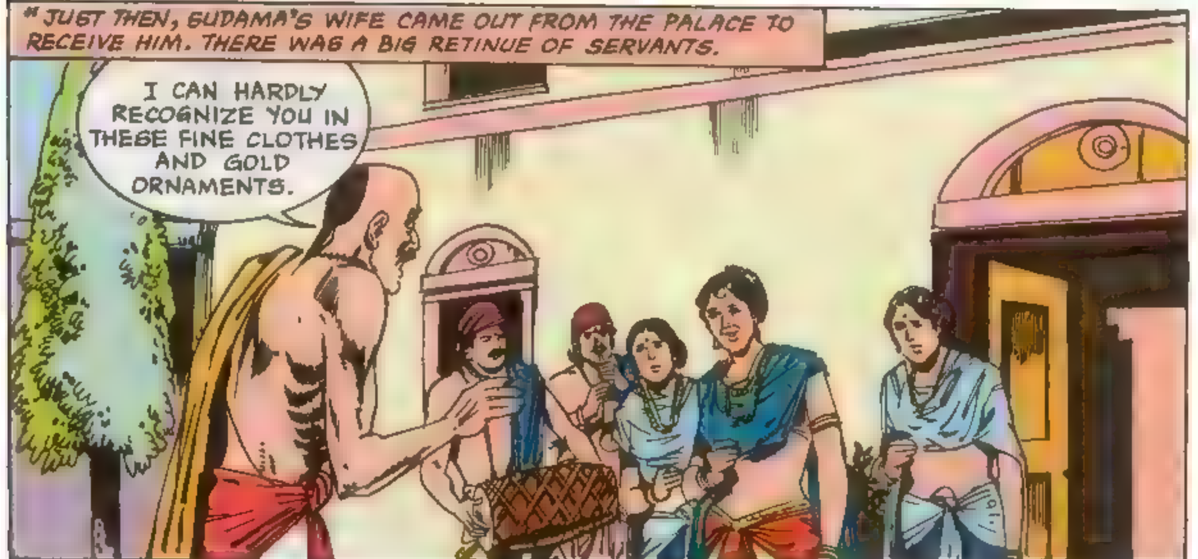

"ALTHOUGH HE HAD ASKED FOR NOTHING AND RECEIVED NOTHING FROM KRISHNA, SUDAMA WAS HAPPY WHEN HE LEFT NEXT MORNING.
HOW LUCKY I AM. LORD KRISHNA TREATED ME AS IF I WERE HIS BROTHER.


THOUGH HE IS FAMED FOR HIS GENEROSITY, HE PURPOSELY DID NOT GIVE ME WEALTH.

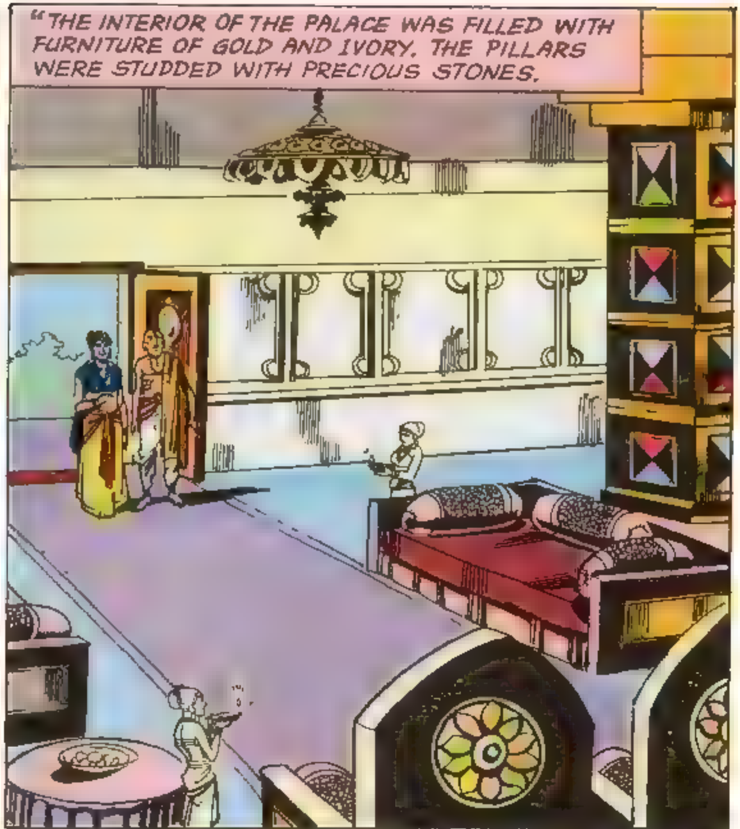

HE KNOWS THAT SUDDEN WEALTH CAN TURN A POOR MAN'S HEAD AND MAKE HIM FORGETFUL OF GOD AND HIS DUTY.


"WHEN HE REACHED HIS VILLAGE AT LAST—
I MUST HAVE LOST MY WAY. I HAVE NEVER SEEN SUCH A WONDERFUL PALACE BEFORE.


"INDEED IT WAS A STUNNING SIGHT– A RESPLENDENT PALACE STUDDED WITH PRECIOUS STONES. IN ITS BEAUTIFULLY LAID GARDENS WERE COLOURFUL BIRDS, AND PONDS FILLED WITH LOTUSES.


"JUST THEN, SUDAMA'S WIFE CAME OUT FROM THE PALACE TO RECEIVE HIM. THERE WAS A BIG RETINUE OF SERVANTS.
I CAN HARDLY RECOGNIZE YOU IN THESE FINE CLOTHES AND GOLD ORNAMENTS.


COME AND SEE INSIDE.


"THE INTERIOR OF THE PALACE WAS FILLED WITH FURNITURE OF GOLD AND IVORY. THE PILLARS WERE STUDDED WITH PRECIOUS STONES.


ALL THIS CAN ONLY BE THROUGH THE BENEVOLENCE OF KRISHNA.

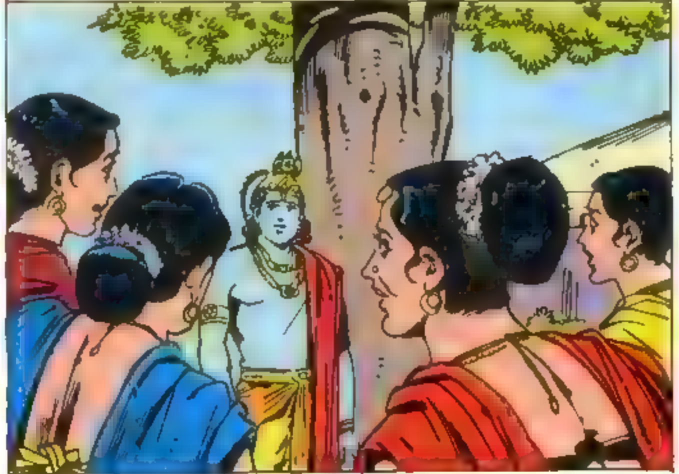

I DID NOT ASK HIM ANYTHING BUT HE MUST HAVE GUESSED WHAT WAS IN MY MIND.



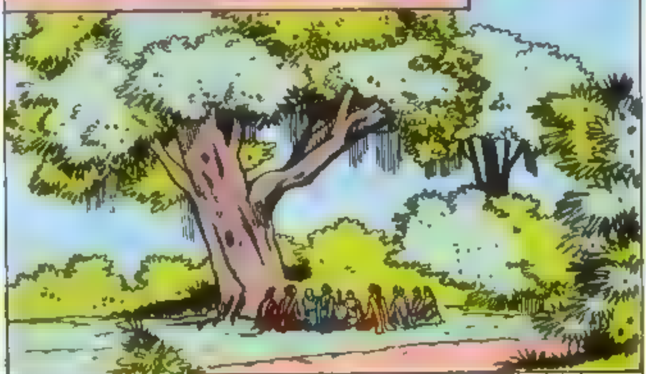


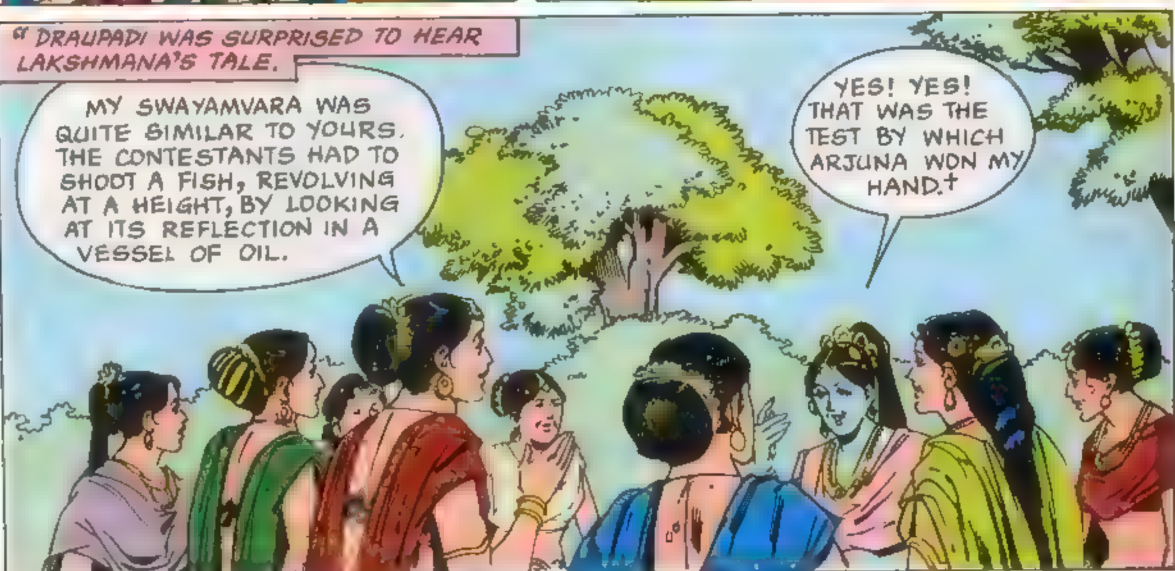
"WHEN, BEDECKED IN THEIR FINEST GARMENTS, FLOWERS AND ORNAMENTS, THEY REACHED KURUKSHETRA, THEY FOUND THE KINGS OF VARIOUS REGIONS ASSEMBLED THERE.



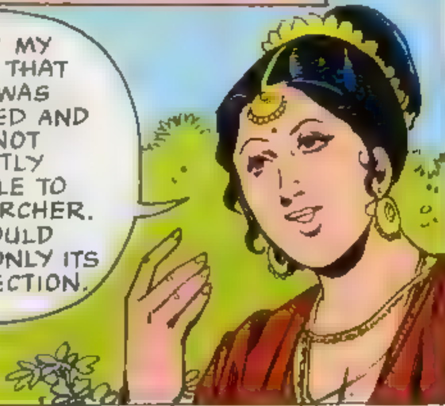






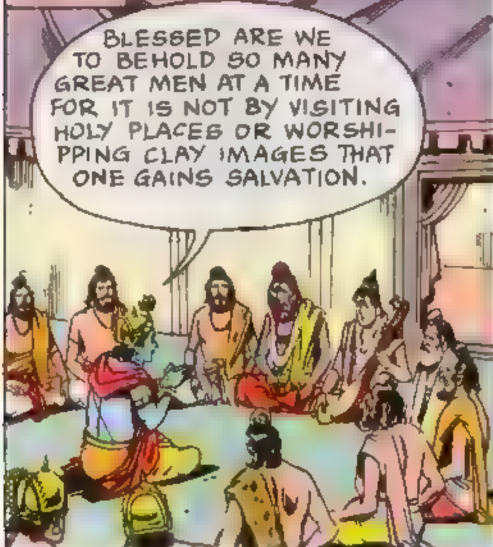


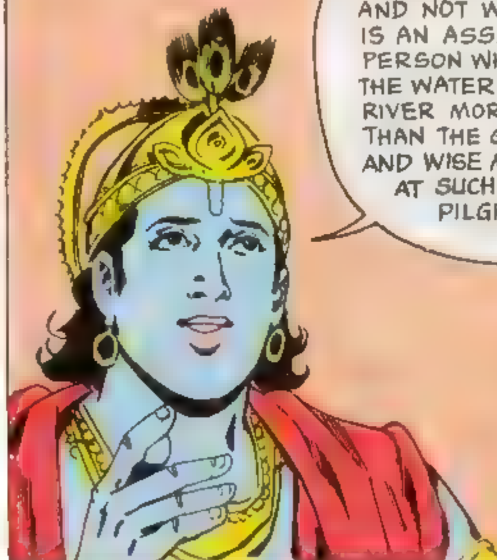
* COWHERDESSES † MAHABHARATA GIVES A DIFFERENT VERSION OF THIS


"LAKSHMANA CONTINUED —
BUT IN MY CASE, THAT FISH WAS COVERED AND WAS NOT DIRECTLY VISIBLE TO THE ARCHER. HE COULD SEE ONLY ITS REFLECTION.

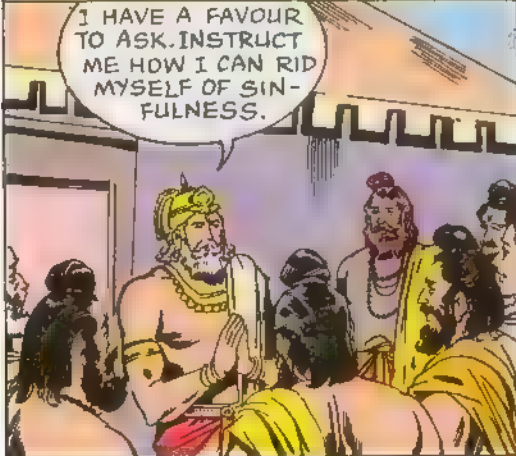

MANY BRAVE MEN INCLUDING DURYODHANA, JARASANDHA, SHISHUPALA AND KARNA TRIED THEIR HAND BUT THEY COULD NOT FELL THE FISH. BUT KRISHNA DID IT SO EFFORTLESSLY.
"DRAUPADI, KUNTI AND GANDHARI WERE MOVED TO HEAR THE DEVOTION SHOWN TO KRISHNA BY HIS MANY WIVES.

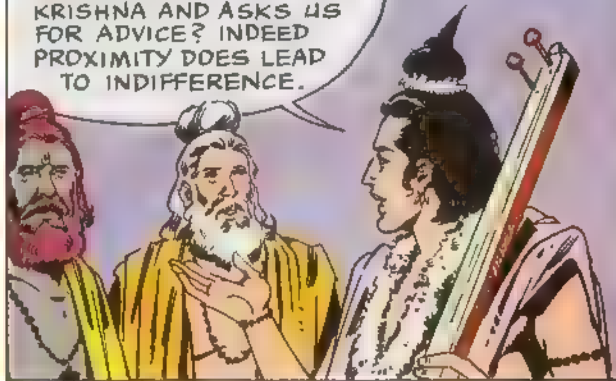

JUST THEN MANY REVERED RISHIS, INCLUDING VEDA VYASA, NARADA AND VISHWAMITRA CAME THERE.


"AFTER THEY WERE RECEIVED WITH DUE HONOUR AND CEREMONY, KRISHNA SAID —
BLESSED ARE WE TO BEHOLD SO MANY GREAT MEN AT A TIME FOR IT IS NOT BY VISITING HOLY PLACES OR WORSHI-PPING CLAY IMAGES THAT ONE GAINS SALVATION.


HE WHO IDENTIFIES HIMSELF WITH HIS BODY AND NOT WITH THE SOUL IS AN ASS. SO IS THE PERSON WHO CONSIDERS THE WATER OF THE RIVER MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE GREAT RISHIS AND WISE MEN GATHERED AT SUCH PLACES OF PILGRIMAGE.


"AT FIRST THE RISHIS, WHO HAD COME TO OFFER WORSHIP TO KRISHNA, WERE SURPRISED BY THE REVERENCE SHOWN BY KRISHNA. THEN REALISATION DAWNED ON THEM.
O LORD, YOU REVEL IN BEHAVING LIKE AN ORDINARY MORTAL. LET ALONE THE KINGS GATHERED HERE, EVEN THE PEOPLE WHO ARE CLOSEST TO YOU ARE UNAWARE OF YOUR DIVINE FORM.


"AFTER OFFERING HOMAGE TO KRISHNA, THE RISHIS WERE ABOUT TO TAKE LEAVE WHEN VASUDEVA STOPPED THEM.
I HAVE A FAVOUR TO ASK. INSTRUCT ME HOW I CAN RID MYSELF OF SIN-FULNESS.

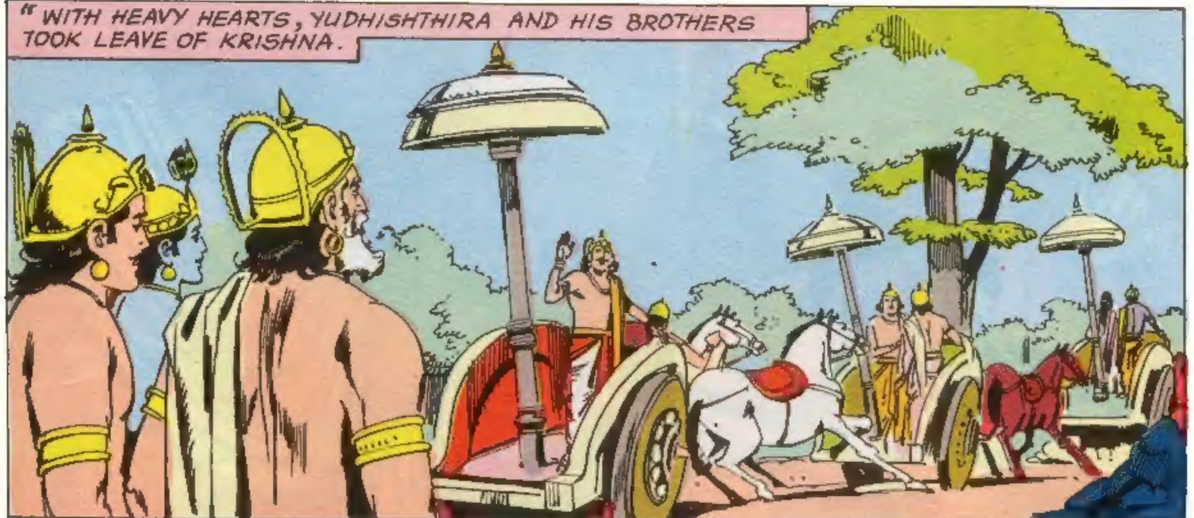

"NARADA SAID IN A WHISPERED UNDERTONE TO HIS COMPANION RISHIS.
IS IT NOT STRANGE THAT HE IS IGNORANT OF THE GREATNESS OF HIS SON KRISHNA AND ASKS US FOR ADVICE? INDEED PROXIMITY DOES LEAD TO INDIFFERENCE.


"ALOUD HE SAID—
YOU SHOULD WORSHIP LORD VISHNU BY PERFORMING A YAJNA.


"UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE RISHIS, VASUDEVA BEGAN A YAJNA AT THE HOLY SPOT.


"AFTER APPLYING CORYLLIUM IN HIS EYES AND SMEARING HIS BODY WITH BUTTER, VASUDEVA PERFORMED THE YAJNA DRESSED IN DEERSKIN WHILE HIS WIVES WERE DECKED IN SILKEN GARMENTS AND BEJEWELLED ORNAMENTS.


"AFTER THE YAJNA, VASUDEVA GAVE GENEROUS GIFTS TO THE RISHIS AND THE ASSEMBLED KINGS. KRISHNA, BALARAMA AND UGRASENA WORSHIPPED NANDA AND OTHER GOPAS AND SHOWERED THEM WITH GIFTS.
NANDA! I AM EVER INDEBTED TO YOU FOR TAKING CARE OF MY CHILDREN WHEN THEY WERE YOUNG.

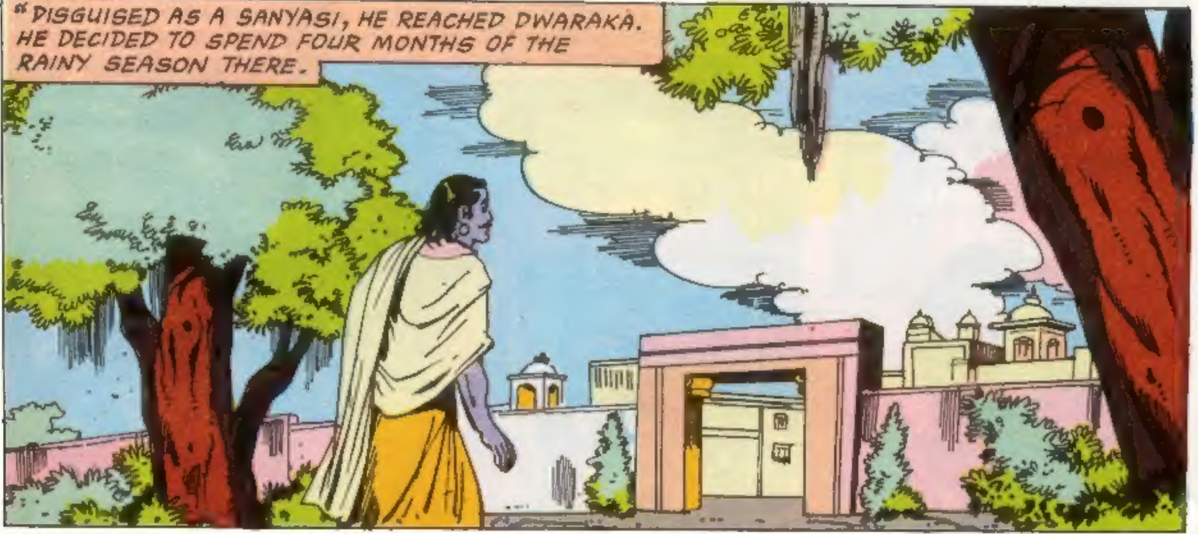

"WITH HEAVY HEARTS, YUDHISHTHIRA AND HIS BROTHERS TOOK LEAVE OF KRISHNA.

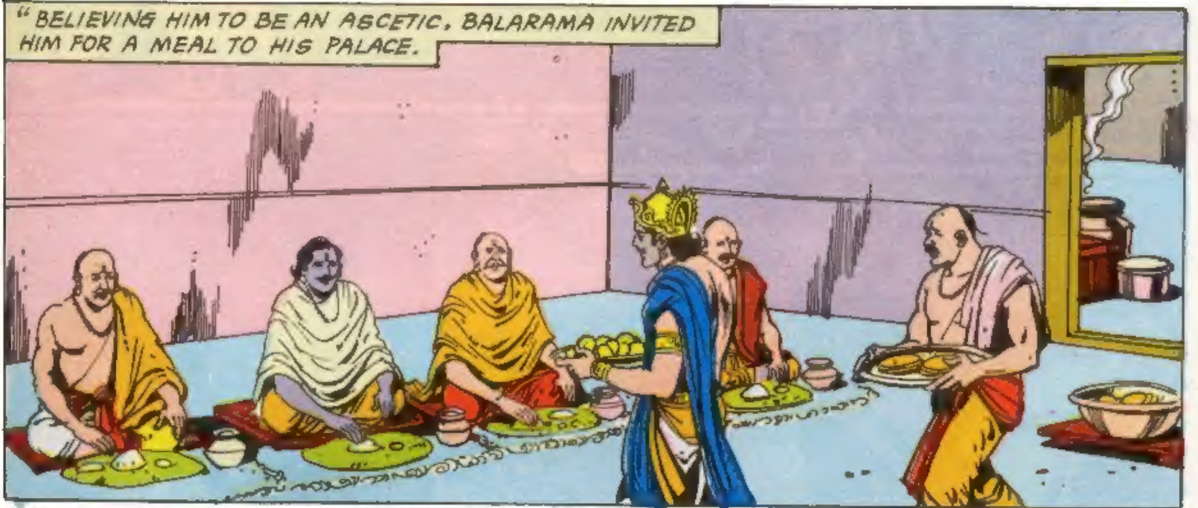
ON RETURNING TO DWARAKA, DEVAKI, WHO WAS BY NOW CONVINCED ABOUT THE DIVINE NATURE OF KRISHNA AND BALARAMA, REQUESTED THEM TO RESTORE HER SONS WHO HAD BEEN KILLED BY THE CRUEL KAMSA. KRISHNA AND BALARAMA BROUGHT HER SONS TO LIFE. THOUGH THEY SOON DISAPPEARED AGAIN, DEVAKI WAS CONTENT TO HAVE FEASTED HER EYES ON THEIR FACES.

TELL ME HOW MY GRANDFATHER ARJUNA MARRIED MY GRANDMOTHER SUBHADRA, WHO WAS KRISHNA'S SISTER.













* ACCORDING TO A MAHABHARATA VERSION, ARJUNA REVEALS HIS REAL IDENTITY TO HER.



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